

New York Times  
Letters to the Editor  
May 8, 2016

To the Editor:

As a contributor to the forthcoming California History-Social Science Framework, I question statements made in “Debate Erupts in California over How Curriculum Should Portray India.” (news article, May 8).

The article implies that the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) has directed these protests. In fact several organizations and individuals have testified before California’s Instructional Quality Commission regarding proposed content on India. HAF, as well as the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies, have submitted scrupulous, intellectually responsible recommendations to the commission. The article, however, conflates these organizations with more radical groups, which have pitched nationalistic, romantic versions of the Indian past. HAF should be distinguished from them.

Second, Thomas Hansen is quoted as advocating replacement of the term “India” with “South Asia” in the framework and future textbooks, except for post-World War II history. The article does not explain the desirability of such an innovation except to claim, wrongly, that HAF wants to call “everything Hindu and Indian so that it can equate modern-day India with its historic roots.” The HAF leadership simply understands that documents dating back many centuries, as well as modern scholarship, have commonly identified “India” with historical developments on the subcontinent generally. Categorically renaming India “South Asia” will certainly confuse California teachers, and rightly so. They have enough on their plates without having to accommodate the odd proposals of a particular group of academic revisionists.

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